Pupil

Brianne Carpenter

One time I saw a *National Geographic*

with eyes on the cover. Eyes

the color of honey and pondwater. Eyes

whose mouth’s angle was draped

behind a veil. A whole generation—

that couldn’t find Afghanistan

on a map—knew the country by its eyes.

The journalist won prizes.

The child with no more family

left school, was married, made her own.

One time I saw a movie set in 2506,

half a millennium after 1984, but

the government was still keeping track of everyone

by scanning their retinas because

the fingerprint of your eye never changes

--you always have the same soul,

and that never changes either.

It leaps into your eyes when you are born,

which is why you can recognize yourself

in baby pictures, even though you are bald and have no teeth.

Seventeen years later, *National Geographic*

gathered a search party out of

curiosity, compassion, or because

Afghanistan was important again.

They traveled across oceans and deserts,

through mountains, archives, along the trails

traced by word of mouth

to find eyes.

When they found them, they published an article.

It came with lots of proof and scientific data

because no one could believe that, in seventeen years,

the eyes had found their way

into the worn face of an old woman.

Everyone thought, “She could have been

so beautiful.” They thought,

“She could have had a different life.”

Some wondered who decides what life is best.

Some gave money.

Many forgot.

If someday, in a morning, you see you,

in a mirror or the dent of a spoon, and wonder

Where is my soul and where has it gone, remember this:

Catch the gaze of a woman

on the metro, subway, tram.

Look at a man. Seek and

you will find you in

the slivered space,

a flash between souls.